

**Rancho La Costa
Habitat Conservation Area**

**A Dedicated Natural Open Space System Set Aside As Part
of the La Costa Villages and University Commons Developments**

**Annual Work Plan
October 2002 - September 2003**

Prepared for:
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
California Department of Fish and Game**



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I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This annual year work plan is developed from the guidelines for goals and objectives set forth in the Habitat Management Plan for the La Costa Preserve (now named Rancho La Costa) dated August 2001. The Management Plan includes management requirements agreed to by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game, and additional management activities that the Center feels is appropriate to protect and maintain the natural resources in perpetuity. The Center for Natural Lands Management (hereafter the "Center" or CNLM) holds title to the Rancho La Costa Habitat Conservation Area (Preserve) and performs or oversees the tasks identified in the plan.

The Preserve was created by combining several areas which were dedicated to the Center for long term management from the La Costa Villages and University Commons developments. Specific parcel names have been referred to as the Oaks and Ridge, Greens, Huff, Setter, Wilern, Nelson, Brouwer, Elfin Forest and Winston. At this time (December 2002), the Center only owns ½ of the Preserve, with the remaining parcels due within the next two to eight months. From February to about June, 2002, the Center received title to the Oaks and Ridge, Huff, Setter, Wilern and Brouwer parcels. The Nelson property was deeded to the Center in 2001, but the Center has not received the management endowment from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This work plan assumes that all funds and land will be acquired by the middle of 2003 and that most of the tasks identified will be accomplished.

The purpose of this work plan is to identify the tasks and budget required to complete the management activities for the 2002-2003 management year. The management year is the new fiscal year adopted by the CNLM, and will begin on October 1, 2002 and end on September 30, 2003. Unless otherwise stated, all tasks will be performed by the Center's Preserve Manager, Markus Spiegelberg.

Summary of Tasks and Goals for the 2002-2003 Fiscal Year:

(* required by CDFG and USFWS per the Management Plan)

- Replace signs and fix fencing as necessary.
- Monitor the coastal California gnatcatcher population*, other sensitive bird species*, and the entire bird community.
- Note all animal species observed, and map locations of any sensitive species*.
- Map the distribution and estimate the population size of sensitive plant species.*
- Conduct on-the-ground vegetation sampling for long term vegetation analysis.
- Conduct pit-fall arrays to document reptile and amphibian species.*
- Remove non-native plant species, especially Eucalyptus and Acacia.*
- Patrol and conduct site enforcement on a regular basis.*
- Lead a community nature walk.
- Report and describe data collected and management actions taken on the Property to the wildlife agencies*.

- Provide an accounting of funds to be spent in the fiscal year*.

Appendix 1 (*2002-2003 Field Schedule*) identifies the approximate schedule of field work throughout the management year. Appendix 2 (*Annual Budget 2002-2003*) provides a financial summary for both person hours and costs for the year. The location of the preserve is mapped in Appendix 3.

II. MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The following sections identify and describe the activities to be performed during the 2002-2003 management year. Based upon the Property Analysis Record (PAR) developed by the Center to outline long-term management tasks and costs, management activities for the Preserve can be broken down into seven large blocks of tasks: Capital Improvements, Biological Surveys, Habitat Restoration, Public Services, Reporting, Office Maintenance, and Operations. Each of these categories will be discussed below.

NOTE: All categories marked with an * are required as per the Management Plan.

A. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The maintenance of fencing and signs are the only capital improvements to be undertaken during the 2002-2003 management year.

1. **Fencing** Fencing and gating will be placed in those locations that it is deemed necessary. Most of this will be on the off-site parcels.
2. **Signing** CNLM signs have been posted at all of the major access points to the Preserve and a few other notable locations for the Phase I parcels. These signs will be replaced as necessary. Each sign explains that the Preserve is a dedicated open space, and that OHV activity, mountain biking, dumping and shooting is prohibited. Signs will be placed at all new parcels as they are turned over to the Center.

B. BIOLOGICAL SURVEYS

The general goal of the monitoring activities at the Preserve at this time is to collect inventory data on all plant and animal species at the Preserve, and to begin to develop population trend data on individual species and for certain taxonomic groups. During the 2002 field season, data was collected on the bird community and small mammal community.

Monitoring will include focused surveys for threatened and endangered species, and for sensitive species that warrant particular attention. Monitoring in the next year will focus on the bird and reptile community, sensitive plant surveys, and the vegetation community. All data will be

entered or stored in GIS and/or MSAccess databases. A brief description of monitoring activities outlined by taxa is provided below:

1. Amphibian and Reptile Monitoring*

During this fiscal year, between 6 and 10 pit fall arrays will be set up within the Preserve. Each array will be opened for five days in a row, during 5 or 6 times during the year. The goal is to sample reptiles and amphibians at different times of the year. It is anticipated that surveys will commence in January of 2003 and go until September or October of 2003. The Preserve Manager has contacted CDFG and has received permission to conduct these surveys and has received a CDFG collecting permit for the work.

2. Small Mammal Monitoring*

Small mammal trapping was conducted during 2002, and will not be conducted again in 2003. Once all inventory data has been collected, a small mammal trapping protocol will be established.

3. California Gnatcatcher & Avifauna Monitoring*

The goal of avifaunal monitoring is to determine species richness and relative abundance, to determine which migratory species are using the site, and to document any sign of breeding and breeding success. In the year 2002, surveys were conducted to collect presence/absence data and to get a feel for the site. During the 2003 season, the Center will establish permanent point count locations and sample these points at a minimum of three times in the spring, and once or twice in the fall or winter. Each point will be visited for 5 minutes.

Focused attention will be given to the gnatcatcher and other listed or covered species observed during surveys. As the observer walks from point to point, he will observe, note and map all sensitive species to compare with the bird point count data.

4. Insects

Insect occurrences will be documented during other general or focused surveys.

5. Vegetation Sampling

Vegetation sampling will be conducted in 2003. The Center will be contracting out vegetation sampling work to Mr. Scott McMillan, an independent biologist who specializes in botany and plant ecology. Mr. McMillan is currently working with the Center to develop the appropriate vegetation sampling technique which will help us determine the percent cover of non-natives, shrubs, open, herb and other important variables which will allow us to track changes in the plant community over time. In

addition to on-site sampling, the Center will attempt to create a new vegetation map using ArcView Image Analysis, a remote sensing technique. This technique can be useful to track changes in vegetation cover and openness. A complete plant list will also be created.

6. Sensitive Plant Species*

The Preserve hosts over 10 sensitive plant species. All of these species will be monitored, their population size estimated and their locations mapped by Mr. McMillan. After this data is collected, a long-term management strategy will be established.

C. HABITAT RESTORATION AND MAINTENANCE

Habitat restoration and enhancement will continue during the 2002-2003 fiscal year. During the 2002 fiscal year, several stands of fennel and eucalyptus were killed, and a patch of pampas grass was sprayed. The goal for this year is to remove the large stand of Eucalyptus (less than 20 feet in height) along Cadencia Street, remove the acacia and Pampas near El Fuerte, and destroy all non-native near Rancho Santa Fe Road. Most of these activities will be done by contracted labor.

D. PUBLIC SERVICES

Activities centering around public services include the patrolling of the Preserve and the response to emergencies. However, other opportunities for public service will undoubtedly be forthcoming during the year, such as a spring nature walk, local groups and individuals interested in volunteering labor for Preserve projects, and class field trips from local schools. Whenever possible management will try to accommodate these activities.

- 1. Patrols** Patrols will be performed approximately once per week, and usually during biological surveys or other preserve activities. As with 2002, Rancho Santa Fe Security or a Ranger will be hired from June 15 to September 15 to keep people out of Box Canyon and the adjacent areas. Rancho Santa Fe Security or the ranger will patrol Box Canyon and other areas 3 times a day for 7 days a week during those dates. Routine mending of small fence breaks, and replacement of signs are the main tasks. Observations of animal sightings and new human impacts will be gathered during patrols as well.
- 2. Emergency Response** Hours have been allocated from the current budget for management to respond to emergencies on the Preserve. Such emergencies could include response to wildfires, wildlife problems reported by neighbors and illegal trespass.
- 3. Nature Walks** The Preserve manager will attempt to make contact with the neighboring community and conduct a nature walk.

E. REPORTING

Activities included within reporting requirements include the management of the Preserve's database/GIS system, the photo-documentation stations, and the production of various status reports to the USFWS, CDFG and CNLM administration.

1. Database/GIS Management

Data derived from routine patrols and photo-documentation will be entered into and maintained in the Preserve's existing database/GIS system. Additional databases will be established for the various biotic monitoring programs including the production of historical and current vegetation maps. Efforts will be made to coordinate and standardize database fields and parameters with other reserves.

2. Photo-documentation Stations

The ongoing efforts to establish a system of permanent photo-documentation stations will continue during the spring of 2003. Digital photos will be taken and stored on electronic media for fast retrieval, and for use in the databases. Additional slide photos will be taken if needed.

3. Reports

- a. Year-End/Agency Reports** By the end of November 2003, a year-end report will be prepared by the Preserve manager detailing the results of the year's management activities. This report will include recommendations for the continuation of various activities for the following fiscal year and will be submitted to the USFWS and CDFG as required under permit reporting conditions.
- b. 2003-2004 Annual Work Plan** The work plan for the 2003-2004 fiscal year will be formulated by the end of the 2002-2003 fiscal year and will be based upon experiences during previous years' operations. This work plan will be submitted to the USFWS and CDFG.
- c. Management Plan** The Management Plan for this site was produced in August of 2001, and was reviewed and approved by the USFWS and CDFG. However, this report only covered the properties of La Costa Villages, not University Commons. The Management Plan will be updated with all properties as soon as all parcels and endowments are received.

F. OFFICE MAINTENANCE

Preserve Management will maintain offices in an organized manner to facilitate maximum efficiency. This section of the budget includes outlays for general office work, utilities, telephones, etc.

G. OPERATIONS

Operations include the training and professional growth of Preserve Management personnel, and inspection of the Preserve by CNLM administration. Funds have been allocated in the current budget for both the Preserve Manager to attend classes or seminars during the 2002-2003 year. Also included within this category of activity is the conduction of employee reviews.

III. WORKLOAD AND BUDGETS

A. SUPERVISION & STAFFING

The Preserve Manger will be supervised by the Center's Executive Director, Sherry Teresa. Tasks and hours will be coordinated by the Preserve Manager and approved by the Regional Director.

B. BUDGETING

A budget has been prepared for the 2002-2003 year and is included here as Appendix 2. Every effort will be made by Preserve Management to allocated time and expenses according to this estimated budget. The budget for this fiscal year is \$181,437.12 based on summing four project areas (La Costa Villages, University Commons, Nelson and Elfin Forest (University Commons)) and the total endowment left over for these four project areas as of June, 2001 is \$1,097,614 (more funds and land to be received in 2003).

IV. Appendices

Appendix 1.

Appendix 2.

Budgets

Appendix 3.

Preserve Location Maps